

An Unexpected Death

by Britts

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Summary: The Digidestined are back in the real world and have gone back to their normal lives. Unfortunately one of them is about to leave this world and travel to the next...characterdeath...this'll be an ongoing thing so please review.

1. ...I'm dying.

An Unexpected Death

An Unexpected Death

****Author's Notes: ****This isn't a lone story. It's hopefully going to be the first in a series of at least three stories. I'd greatly appreciate it if you'd all review this story and give me some pointers. Don't go and say, "This story sucks!" and so on since these comments aren't very helpful. Thanks and peace out! ~ Britts

"Hey Matt, wait up!" Taichi called down the hall to his friend. Tai thought Matt hadn't completely gotten over the bug that had kept him out of school for about a month. Rumors had spread like wild fire through the school about what had happened to Yamato Ishida. In Literature class Matt had seemed too weak to even write neatly and the teacher had scolded him for it too. His skin had a dead look to it and his eyes seemed to sink into their sockets.

Matt turned around and looked back. "Oh, hi Tai," he muttered as Tai approached. The blond teen gave a weary smile, which made him look even worse. Tai's eyebrows knitted together and he grimaced.

"You never answered my question back there," Tai said.

"What question?" the other asked.

"I asked if you were alright."

"Oh...um..." Matt muttered. "Look, I'll tell you and everyone else later, okay?"

"Yeah...okay," Tai answered softly as they both walked into class moments before the bell rang.

* * * * *

Sora watched from her seat as her two friends walked into the science room. She noticed Matt wasn't doing too well. His shoulders were hunched and his face was downcast.

Sora knew the "secret" he was keeping from the others. She was surprised when he told her that only four people knew what it was - him, his mom, his dad, and her. Matt had told Sora not to tell anyone; that he would tell everyone when he was ready. When he told her, tears had been streaming down his pale cheeks. She had kissed him, really kissed him, then in his moment of despair and fear.

Now, as science class began with a lecture about something to do with the elements, Matt took his seat in the row next to hers. She tapped him on the shoulder and he looked up from the notes he was taking. Sora whispered, "How have you been doing?"

"Okay...I've been better though. I'm lucky the doctors let me come home."

"Yeah...have you told the others yet?"

"Mr. Ishida! Miss Takenouchi! Is there something you'd like to add to the discussion."

"No, sir," they said in unison. When the teacher turned back around Matt leaned over and whispered, "No, I haven't told them. I'm going to tell everyone at once at the park after school."

"Mr. Ishida!"

Matt gulped as the class turned to him. "Yes, sir?"

"I've warned you once I'm not going to do it again. You just got back from a rather long break and I would think that you'd have the decency to listen to what I have to teach and not talk in class."

Matt pulled a nonchalant mask over his tired features and said, "Well, sir, old habits die hard, but, if you want me to, I'll shut my mouth now and you can continue with the extremely interesting lesson."

Missing Matt's sarcastic tone, the teacher continued, "Good. Now if you'll all turn in your books to page 400..."

* * * * *

Matt sat on the bench in the park after school waiting for the others. It felt good to be outside after being cooped up so long. He closed his eyes and let the breeze blow his strawberry blond hair across his blue eyes. He sighed and watched the other people enjoying

the beautiful day.

He perked up as he saw two children playing together. The oldest was about eight years old and his younger brother had to be around three years younger. Matt smiled as he remembered when he and TK had looked and acted so innocent.

"Hey Matt!" Matt swiped a solitary tear from his eye and turned to see Tai and Sora coming up to him. He smiled as Sora took the offered seat next to him and Tai sat in front of them both.

"You told the others to meet us here, right?" Matt asked Tai.

"Sure did," he replied. "As a matter of fact, here they come now." He pointed east to where Mimi and Joe were walking next to each other with Izzy a good three yards behind.

"Hi everyone," Mimi said cheerfully. "Where's Kari and TK if everyone's supposed to be here? Don't you have something important to tell us?"

"Kari has a big test tomorrow and TK has a game...right?" Tai turned to Matt.

Matt nodded stood up pulling Sora with him. "Right Tai and I do have something important to say but I don't want to say it here. Follow me." He turned and walked into a small grove of trees away from prying eyes.

When they were all there he turned to them. "I don't want any of you to say anything until I'm done, okay?" he asked looking at them all one at a time. When he got affirmations from each he continued. "I also want you to know that this is in no way a joke. I may be aloof but I'm not ignorant. I want to get this all out at once and then you can ask questions." Matt took a deep breath and looked at them with his sapphire eyes straight ahead.

"I'm dying."

2. ...he rushed to his fallen son.

An Unexpected Death: Part II

An Unexpected Death: Part II

****Author's Notes:**** Part two in my little "series" if you wanna call it that. It picks up RIGHT where the first one left off so please read and review this one too!

"I have...something...and it's slowly eating away at me. It's terminal and there's no cure," Matt murmured his voice breaking. He bit his lip when no one responded to his statement.

"Please, someone...just say something...anything..." He could feel the tears starting to form in his azure eyes again. He lowered his head so that the others wouldn't see his weakened spirit.

"What do you have? Do they know?" Joe asked. By the look in his eyes

and the tone of his voice, Matt could tell Joe was more than just slightly flustered.

"Cancer? Maybe. I don't know. I'm pretty sure my dad does and the doctors damn well better," Matt answered him.

"H-how long do you have?" Tai asked in a hushed voice.

"A few weeks to a few months," Matt answered. He took a deep breath. He knew that he sounded cool and confident to the others but he was feeling the exact opposite. The pain and fear and regret kept rolling over him in waves but he utterly refused to let it show. _I can NOT cry now, he thought, I can let the tears out later but not now. I won't cry in front of them. I'll let myself cry later..._

* * * * *

Tai opened his family's apartment door with his key and walked in. His mother was helping Kari with some last minute studying in the kitchen while his dad was reading his new book. Mr. Kamiya looked up from his reading at his son.

"Where've you been?" he asked.

"At the park," Tai answered softly.

"What were you doing?" his mother joined in on the conversation. Tai's gaze shifted from Kari to his mom to his dad and then back to his little sister. God, she looked so innocent. What would happen if she lost him or he lost her? Tai's eyes squeezed shut and his brow furrowed. He shivered and looked up at his parents.

"Look, I...uh...I don't want to talk about it right now," he told them and with that he went into his room, closed the door, and collapsed in his bed. He lay there with his head in his hands. He couldn't believe what was happening. Matt was dying and there wasn't a thing that could be done to prevent it. Matt had told them that he didn't want to be pitied or fussed over; he just wanted to know that they'd all be there for him when he needed them.

Tai rolled onto his back and looked up at the ceiling. He lay like that until exhaustion overtook him.

* * * * *

Matt walked into the apartment he and his dad shared and tossed the keys on the coffee table. He picked up the piece of paper that was posted on the refrigerator. It was in his dad's handwriting and read -

Matt - Went to store to pick up a few things. Be back ASAP. Remember to take meds at 6! - Dad

Matt finished reading the note and looked at the clock on the wall. Six o'clock, perfect timing. Matt went to the cabinet, took out the bottles and pulled out the prescribed dosage placing each pill on the counter. He looked down at them with a sigh. So many pills, so little time, Matt thought darkly as he poured himself a glass of water and swallowed them one by one.

Matt finished them and went back to the living room. He had three tests next week in school and since he most likely wouldn't be doing anything this weekend, he might as well study. He sighed again and started working.

After awhile Matt looked up at the clock and saw it was around 7:00 PM. He rubbed his eyes and stood up. Immediately he felt light-headed and he dropped back onto the couch. He shook his head, trying to clear it.

Matt stood up again, slower this time. He walked to the hall leading to his room and was hit with another wave of dizziness. He thrust his hand out against the wall to steady himself. Matt managed to get down the hall and to his room by running his hands along the walls to keep himself from falling. Then, all of a sudden, the world spun and went black.

* * * * *

Mr. Ishida walked into the apartment and hung his coat in the closet. He walked into the living room and saw his son's jacket and schoolwork on the couch. His face shifted into a mournful smile and then he closed his eyes to be sure the tears wouldn't fall. Soon there wouldn't be homework or not-so-good grades or messy rooms to clean or teenage angst. Matt would be gone...Mr. Ishida shook his head violently. No, he wouldn't let himself think such things. Matt was strong. He'd pull through.

"Matt? I'm home," he called into the apartment. He waited for his son to come bounding into the room happy to see him home.

But no one came. The only time that would ever happen would be when Matt was playing music in his room.

But there wasn't any music. Something wasn't right...

"Matt? You home?" Mr. Ishida called and turned down the hall...
"Matt? Oh my God! Matt!" he cried as he rushed to his fallen son.

3. ...Where's the phone?...

An Unexpected Death: Part III

An Unexpected Death: Part III

****Author's notes:**** Same as always, people - no flaming. I was on what The_Patriot said - "a little hiatus in South Carolina." Sorry it took so long. Thank you to everyone who's been reading and giving me comments and this is NOT the last one. Peace out! ~ Britt's (Mimi and Joe's part takes place during Matt's.)

After the meeting at the park, Joe and Mimi had walked back to the Kido family's residence. They had walked in silence; the shock of Matt's statement still sinking in. For once in a long time, Mimi was speechless. Joe let them in with his key and closed the door behind them.

"My parents aren't back yet," Joe commented. "So what do you want to

do?"

"I don't know," Mimi answered softly not meeting his eyes.

"Something to eat or drink?"

"No..." Mimi said as she sat down on the couch with her hands clasped in her lap.

Joe sighed and walked over to where Mimi was sitting. He sat down beside her and brushed away a lock of hair that was hiding her face. Her eyes were down cast and brimming with unshed tears.

Mimi took his hand in hers and studied it for a while. _Life's so fragile_, she thought. _I've learned that today. I've taken it for granted so many times. I've never really appreciated the small things. What would happen if one of us..._She put Joe's hand down and leaned forward with her head in her hands as her shoulders started to shake with quiet sobs.

Joe wrapped his arms around her and held her close. Mimi turned and returned the gesture. They sat in each other's arms for a long time.

* * * * *

Ms. Takiashi looked up as her son Takeru stood and stretched as he yawned.

"I'm going up," he said as he gave her a quick hug and a kiss goodnight.

"Alright. Don't stay up too late," she replied with a tired smile. TK nodded as he headed up the stairs to his room yawning again. Nancy smiled again as she watched her son ascend the stairs. He looked and acted so much like his brother now. Lately it had been so hard for her to look the blond boy in the eyes. _What makes it worse_, she thought, _is that he doesn't know._

Nancy brushed away a tear as it rolled down her cheek. _Why hadn't they told him?_ She _hated_ lying to her youngest son. Then she remembered why they decided not to. Matt wanted to tell his younger brother himself when he was ready to. _Apparently he's not ready yet_, Nancy thought angrily. She looked up from her book and glanced at the clock, which read 7:37. TK was definitely not going to sleep. He was most likely going to go downstairs when he thought she was asleep and get on the Internet and stay on into early morning. He'd been doing that a lot lately.

Nancy got up from the couch after marking her place in her book and went to the kitchen to make herself a drink. As she walked to the refrigerator the phone rang. She looked at it warily before picking it up.

"Hello?...Oh no...Where?...Oh God...Ok...We'll be right there," she said before hanging up the phone. "TK!"

"What?" he called anxiously from the bottom of the stairs.

"Get your shoes on. We have to go to the hospital," she said grabbing her own jacket and shoes.

"Why?" he asked quietly.

"Don't ask questions. Just get into the car," she said hotly. When he didn't move she knew just what phrase would send him into motion.

"It's your brother."

* * * * *

Izzy sat in his room. He had tried working on the computer and then reading a book. Now he was just staring at a wall. Nothing was working. He couldn't get his mind off of the events of earlier that day. He looked at the clock - 8:00.

I wonder how Matt's doing, Izzy thought as he got up and stretched. All he could think about was what Matt had told them. _"I'm dying."_ Izzy shook his head violently trying to rid the image of Matt's haunted gaze and weakened body. _Why is this happening? Did we do something wrong and in doing so damn an innocent? Of all the people this could happen to, why Matt?_

Izzy yawned. _Why am I so tired?_ he thought and he shrugged. He changed into a pair of nightclothes. He sat on his bed staring at the wall once again. Usually he would stay up late on the net or something but he couldn't tonight. Something told him that he would need his rest for the near future.

His body demanded sleep but his mind refused to slow down. He kept trying to figure out if there was something that everyone had missed while in his heart he knew that there was nothing. It was like trying to solve a puzzle when half of the pieces were missing. The dead ends looped over and around each other for hours until his eyes shut and he gratefully fell into the abyss of sleep.

* * * * *

When Matt finally came to, the first thing his mind registered was _white_. The walls, the ceiling, everything was white. And it wasn't just cloud white or even bleach white; it was _sterile white_.

The second thing he noticed was the steady beeping from his bedside. He turned his head and saw all of the machines monitoring almost every possible body function. He groaned and thought, _A hospital. I'm in another God-forsaken hospital. _He moved his hand to his face and felt the tubes helping him breathe. _I must've given them some trouble if they thought I couldn't breathe on my own._

He looked to the foot of the bed and noticed his father lying there asleep. Mr. Ishida's hand resting on his son's leg. His face was contorted in worry and tears stained his cheeks. Matt moved his leg and was rewarded with his father's eyes opening and locking with his own.

Mr. Ishida walked to where Matt lay and sat on the bed next to Matt. He wrapped his arms around his frail son being careful of the IV and the tubes helping Matt to breathe. Tears welled up in their eyes as

they held each other close.

What's happening to me? Matt thought as he sobbed. His father responded by rubbing gentle circles on his son's back until Matt's breathing slowed and he relaxed into his father's warm embrace.

* * * * *

TK fidgeted in the hospital's uncomfortable, plastic, waiting room chairs. He'd come here last night with his mom and asked question after question. No one had paid him any attention. Either that or he didn't understand the answers. _Just like when I was younger_, he thought bitterly. TK was starting to get frustrated and the fact that he hadn't gotten any sleep the night before wasn't helping.

Mr. Ishida walked into the waiting room looking above and beyond haggard. TK and his mother looked up simultaneously.

"Is he awake?" Ms. Takiashi asked her ex-husband.

"Yes---," he started.

"Can I go talk to him?" TK cut in, jumping to his feet.

"No," his mother answered him.

"Why not?"

"Because he needs his rest," his father replied.

"His rest?!" TK cried. "He's just slept at least 15 hours straight!"

"TK - calm down," his mother demanded.

"No, I won't. Not until I get some answers. There's something major that no one is telling me and I wanna know what it is!"

"I'll tell you, TK," the brown-haired man said softly knowing that scolding the boy for his outburst would only make things worse.

"Alright, so tell me," TK snarled as he crossed his arms across his chest much like his older brother. Mr. Ishida took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He told his younger son about the events of the past few months, Matt's sickness, and what happened that brought Matt to the hospital.

TK looked horrified. He wrapped his arms around himself as he started shaking. One of the important people - perhaps the MOST important person - was dying. Why Matt? Why now? Why? Why? Why? TK took a shuddering breath, turned, and walked away.

"TK!" Ms. Takiashi called down the hall to her retreating son.

"Let him go," Mr. Ishida said evenly as he put a hand on his ex-wife's shoulder. "He needs time to think."

TK walked down the hall, his eyes seeing nothing around him. After running into a few dead ends, he found his way to the pay phones. A

thought occurred to him and he rooted around in his pockets and found some change. He dropped the coins in the slot and started dialing.

* * * * *

Ring...

Ring...

"I got it!" Hikari Kamiya called to the others in the house as she picked up the phone.

"Hello?...Oh, hi TK..." Kari's smile faded. "...You're kidding, right?...You're not?!...Oh, God...He'll be all right though, won't he?...When do visiting hours start...?" At this, Mrs. Kamiya looked up at her daughter and noticed she looked distraught.

"...All right...I'll start the chain...Don't worry, everything will be okay...Bye," Kari hung up the phone and ignored her mom's inquiries of what just transpired.

"TAI!" Kari called down the hall as she ran to her older brother's room.

"What?!" he asked her sticking his head out the door.

"I was just on the phone with TK. Something's happened to Matt," Kari said quickly as she watched her brother pale.

"What happened?" Tai asked.

"He collapsed and was admitted into the hospital last night."

"Oh, God..." Tai muttered looking away.

"TK wants us to start the chain and have the group be at the hospital when visiting hours start; he'll meet us in the lobby. You have everyone's number?"

"Where's the phone?"

4. No...

An Unexpected Death: Part IV

An Unexpected Death: Part IV

****Author's Notes: ****This is the fourth and final installment of the "UD" series as I've been calling it. I am ****_SO SORRY_**** that it took this long for it to be posted. I'm sure all of you 1) don't care, 2) lost interest when I didn't post it soon enough, or 3) have gone stock raving mad. ****_GOMEN NASAI_**** everyone! ****NOTE:**** The song I used, "Darkness and Shadows," was written by my friend DarkSaint (AKA "do-not-use-my-name-in-there-you-moron!") As an after thought - same as the first three - no flaming me, only constructive criticism. Anyway...shall we end my senseless ranting and go ON WITH THE FREAKING STORY! ~ Britts

Thank you and have a nice day!

Fuming, TK paced in front of the group that had formed in one of the hospital's many waiting rooms. He was mad. He was above and beyond mad. But...he was also very sad...and terrified. Why hadn't Matt told him what was going on? They could always talk to each other. So why had TK's older brother kept this from him? His pacing faltered slightly but he regained his composure before anyone could come to his aid. He turned to look at the rest of the Digidestined.

They looked almost as bad as he was feeling. Hardly any of them looked rested. Mimi was leaning somewhat heavily on Joe who sat on her right and looked like he was going to have a panic attack...or something along those lines. Sora was staring off into space, Kari was biting her nails, a rarity for her, and Izzy looked like he had just woken up from one Hell of a nightmare. Tai, however, seemed the most out of character.

He was bent forward, his head resting in his hands. His elbows were in turn resting on his knees and he looked worried sick. TK knew Matt and Tai were close but it was still strange to see the "leader" of the Digidestined reduced to such an anxious teenager. It was true that Matt could be jumpy every now and then but Tai...never! The soccer player looked like he'd been punched in the stomach. TK almost took pity on him...almost.

"I want to know," TK started coldly as everyone looked up at him, "How long have you all known?"

Tai was the first to respond to the boy's icy tone. "We found out yesterday after school. He was going to tell you..." The older boy found it impossible to continue. His vocal chords seemed to freeze and he looked down at the floor again.

"Well he didn't. No help from any of you," TK said with a glare that seemed to pierce the very soul of everyone present. His voiced suddenly took on a jagged edge. "You didn't tell me. None of you did. My brother is DYING and you didn't tell me." Tears started streaming from the troubled azure eyes. His voice hitched suddenly. "Why? Why didn't you tell me?" The boy paced to the nearest wall and slammed his fist against the unyielding plaster. "Why didn't he tell me?! Why?! Why?! WHY?!_" His fist pounding against the wall for emphasis of each question. TK's shoulders started to shake violently as the sobs that had been suppressed suddenly started to wrack his small frame.

Tai watched as the younger boy slowly dropped to the floor against the wall. He couldn't take this...this pain anymore. He stood up and walked quietly over to the distressed youth who was still whispering his mantra. Tai blinked back tears that wanted to be shed and wrapped his arms around the fallen child. TK started and seemed to want to jump away but decided better of it and relaxed into the arms that encircled his shoulders.

"It'll be alright...It'll be okay...Sssshhhh...He'll be alright..." words of comfort met deaf ears as Tai rocked the other boy back and forth.

* * * * *

Matt sat upright in his hospital bed. The doctors had removed the

respirator seeing that he was conscious and was able to breathe on his own.

He knew that the doctors and various nurses were doing all they could to help...no...save him, but he also knew that nothing they did was working.

His parents were in the middle of a heated argument. Amazingly, it wasn't between each other.

"More treatments?!" his mother cried. "None of the ones you've used have helped!"

"All that's happened is they either have no affect or they make him worse," his father added.

"We know as much but we want to try a different approach," one of the doctors, an older guy that somehow managed to keep his thinning brown hair. Matt nearly laughed at the thought of the guy using some kind of strange hair renewal product as well as various dyes.

"A different approach? How many different approaches have you tried?!" Matt's mother answered hotly.

"We're going to give him an experimental treatment that will hopefully work and if that has no effect then the only other option is chemotherapy," the other doctor, a woman, replied.

He looked up at the arguing adults. He was sick of them talking like he wasn't here. He was sick and tired of all the tests and treatments that time after time refused to work. Matt took a deep breath and spoke up.

"No."

He watched as everyone in the room turned to him in unison. It might have been comical if what was happening wasn't so dramatic. His father recovered from the shock of his son speaking first.

"No what, Matt?"

"No more tests. No more treatments. No more."

"But...why?" his mother asked.

"Because I am sick of them all. It's obvious that none of them are working and I REALLY don't want to spend the rest of my shortened life stuck in a place like this with nothing but white walls to look at. I want to be out...away...even if it is to be the death of me..."

After his short little speech, Matt looked down at his clasped hands that rested in his lap. He bit back the tears that were once again threatening to spill from his sapphire eyes. He looked up and was met with similarly colored eyes. TK...Matt thought as he looked into his younger brother's eyes.

"Then...where do you want to be Matt?" the younger boy asked.

Matt looked out the lone window in his room at the distant mountains

and smiled.

* * * * *

A few days later, after they got the stuff at the hospital cleared up, Matt was back at home. He wasn't necessarily doing much better, but he was home...and he was packing so he could leave. He was rummaging around his room for the things that he'd want with him at the house in the country. He only took what he thought he would need..._I'm most likely not coming back_, he thought bitterly.

Matt always liked it at his grandmother's house. It was far away from everything...well, almost everything...and he felt that he could just forget all the problems in his life when he was out there. When his grandmother died a few years ago, she left the house to the family. The teen was happy she did and that they hadn't sold it. He was so deep in his memories and feelings that he didn't notice when someone walked into his room.

"So you're leaving, huh?" a gentle tenor voice inquired from behind the blond. Matt whirled to face the newcomer.

"Oh...Hi Tai..." he replied softly putting some more things into his bags to take. "Yeah, I'm leaving."

"I guess this means that you aren't gonna be at school for the History test then..." his voice trailed off.

"Yeah...guess not..." Matt answered, picking up a picture to put with the rest of the luggage. It wasn't really just one picture though. It was a collage of many - at least 8 - of him and the other Digidestined. His eyes focused on each one in turn. The memories of each shot flashed behind his eyes before he, blinking back tears, placed it alongside his clothes and Walkman. Matt sighed. The silence between the two friends was becoming oppressive. The blond youth turned to face his amber-eyed friend. What he saw surprised him - he saw tears.

Taichi Kamiya of all people was crying. In front of him, Yamato Ishida, one of his most prominent rivals in the entire school. Matt was taken aback. He knew Tai cared but he also knew that his friend wasn't the type that let his weaknesses show unless he was under a great deal of emotional stress. Apparently, he was.

"Am I gonna ever see you again?" Tai asked softly, closing his eyes and lowering his head.

"I - I don't know..." Matt answered truthfully. He wanted to believe that he'd see his wild-haired comrade again but he somehow knew that this was the last chance he'd get to talk to him.

Tai nodded and sat on the bed careful not to upset anything that was resting on it. "You know, it's strange," he said after awhile. "Usually I'm the one to go ahead into the unknown and here you are going first..." His voice broke on the last. He took a deep breath and continued. "Why is this happening to you? Why not someone else?" he asked harshly.

"Because it's my turn," Matt answered him softly.

"Your turn my ass," Tai retorted as he stood up. "You're only - what? Fifteen? Sixteen?"

"Sixteen."

"This shouldn't be happening! You have your whole life ahead of you!"

"I HAD my whole life ahead of me."

"Will you stop acting so gothic?!"

"No!"

"Why not?!"

"Because what I'm saying is the TRUTH!"

"Damn it, Matt!" Tai said placing his hands on his hips and turning to face the other who had his frail arms crossed over his chest. Heated, exasperated amber eyes met hooded, irritated azure. Tai sighed, throwing his arms up in the air as he turned his back to Matt. "I give up. I really do..."

"Don't..."

"Don't what?"

"Don't...don't give up."

Tai turned and looked at his companion and now it was his turn to be surprised. Matt looked terrified...desperate...not to mention that there were tears in his eyes now.

"Matt...?"

The other boy pursed his lips and looked away. The unshed tears fell freely down his alabaster cheeks, staining the pale flesh with obvious pain. "Don't give up...never give up..."

"What? Why? What do you mean?" Tai asked, knowing he probably sounded like an idiot with his questions but once again he was surprised; Matt didn't throw any verbal barbs his way.

Matt wrapped his arms around himself and shivered. "If you give up, you lose sight of hope. And if you lose sight of hope, you lose all sense of who you are..." Matt trailed off as more tears fell from his eyes. He held himself tighter and refused to look his friend in the eyes.

Tai walked over to him and placed gentle hands on his friend's shoulders, hoping to relieve some of the pain he saw in the other youth's eyes. At his touch, Matt shivered again with restrained grief and looked into his friend's questioning eyes at last.

"I never want you to lose sight of who you are. That's why I've always admired you..." Matt once again trailed off and closed his eyes. Tai's throat constricted as he himself held back more tears. He wrapped his arms around his fragile companion.

"I'm so scared...I - I don't..." Matt's voice hitched as he returned Tai's gesture. The blond let all his barriers break as he was held close in a comforting embrace and sobbed on Tai's shoulder.

* * * * *

Mr. Ishida watched as Matt picked at the food in front of him. The boy's appetite had continued to diminish especially after the stay at the hospital. Amazingly, however, Matt seemed the most alive here. Away from the city with it's fluorescent lighting and car horns. Away from the endless treatments and doctors. The doctors...

The very thought of the white robed scientists that were STILL at a loss of what was truly sending Matt through a physical Hell made the older man's blood boil. His son was dying and no one knew what to do about it. He, himself, had not a clue, which made the situation in Mr. Ishida's mind even worse.

"Matt? Is something wrong?" Ms. Takiashi asked of her older son who started and looked up at her.

"N-no...nothings wrong...I'm just not very hungry," the blond murmured.

"Oh," the woman answered, not really knowing what else to say.

The meal lasted for another five minutes with random conversations about school, teachers, friends, enemies, and life in particular. Matt excused himself a little while after that, cleaning his dishes and walking up to his room.

* * * * *

TK watched as his brother left the dining room and slowly trudged up to his room. _This can't be good_, he thought. His brother had barely touched his food and it looked like he hadn't slept in days. TK's brows furrowed as he tried to decipher his brother's strange actions of late. Excusing himself as well, leaving his parents a little less than completely confused, he headed up to Matt's room.

Opening the door softly so to not shake his older sibling from his reverie, TK entered the room. _It's gotta be the most comfortable room here_, he thought as he took in the spacious - or as spacious as a room can get in a country home - room and was slightly envious that his brother got such good accommodations but at the same time was glad the teen did. There was a balcony overlooking the valley below and it had a wonderful view of the night sky. One could stand out there and simply be amazed at the vastness. This was how he found Matt - standing on the balcony, his arms resting on the rail and his shoulders hunched, staring up at the stars.

"Beautiful...aren't they?"

TK jumped. He hadn't realized that Matt had heard him enter and said as much. Dropping his gaze and turning slightly, Matt replied.

"Brother's intuition? Sixth Sense? Who knows."

TK laughed harshly and walked up to stand next to the taller youth.

"Why didn't you eat anything tonight?"

"Like I said down there; I wasn't hungry."

"Bull! I know you Matt, and you aren't acting normally."

"Since when have I ever acted 'normally?'" Matt asked as he averted his gaze to the night sky. Quieter, he added, "Especially now..."

TK looked at his older brother_. What is going on with you?_ part of him asked as the other part of him scolded saying, _He's DYING you nitwit!_ The 13-year-old turned to face his older brother who remained profile. "Matt..." he started trying to get the young musician's attention. The younger boy's efforts were rewarded when Matt turned to face him as well. "Matt, I know what's immediately wrong, we all do, but that doesn't explain why you all of a sudden are...well...I don't know..."

"Acting like I want to die?" Matt finished for his younger brother who was fumbling with the words.

"Well...yeah," he answered.

Matt turned away. He couldn't look into TK eyes anymore. They were too bright, too innocent, Hell, too full of life. "I...I don't know...I'm just tired...so very tired..." Matt's voice went into a whisper and stepped back to lean against the door frame. TK started and rushed to him.

"Matt? Are you okay?" Matt looked up once again to meet his brother's blue eyes. Matt's eyes filled with tears at the sound of his brother's caring voice. _I can't cry...not in front of him_, he thought as he rubbed his eyes and made to stand up.

He couldn't.

Oh, crap, he thought. He tried again.

Still couldn't. Mentally kicking himself, he looked back up to his brother's eyes.

"Help me," he whispered hoarsely as he stretched out a pale, shaking hand. TK frowned and grasped his older brother's hand and pulled him to his feet, which wasn't an easy job; Matt was practically dead weight.

"Where do you want to go?" the smaller boy asked as he draped his older brother's arm around his shoulder.

"Pretty much anywhere but the bed," Matt answered. "I've been lying in those things for far too long. Somewhere where I can still see the sky."

"How's the desk?"

"You want me to sit on the desk?" Matt asked incredulously.

"No...I want you to sit _in the chair_ at the desk," TK chuckled.

Matt smiled, "Oh...I see, I see..."

TK helped his frail brother and gently lowered him into the seat. Matt sighed as if the short walk had taken all his strength. The blond teen looked over his shoulder and smiled slightly when he could see the night sky. The stars glittered back at him. He looked back up at his younger brother, "Thank you."

"Hey no problem," TK managed to croak out, tears starting to form once again in his eyes. "Hey, uh, do you want anything else?"

Matt thought awhile before responded quietly, "A piece of paper and a pen."

Confused, TK nodded and fetched them and gave them to his brother. Looking up at the clock he realized that it was almost 1:00 in the morning. He bit his lip and looked back at his brother. "I..."

"I know. Go to bed."

"I don't wanna leave you..."

"You won't. You're just across the hall and dad and mom's rooms are down the hall. I'll be fine. Now go to bed," the older brother scolded.

Smiling, TK nodded and headed toward the door when he was stopped by his brother's call, "TK..."

The younger boy turned and looked at his brother who looked somewhat distressed. "What is it? Something wrong?"

"N-no...it's just that...I wanted to say...that I, uh...I -"

"Matt...I know."

Matt closed his eyes tight and bit back a sob that tried to force itself out of his throat. TK walked quickly back to him and wrapped his arms around his brother.

"I love you Onniichan..." the small boy whispered as he let the tears fall.

"I know, kid, I know," the older boy whispered as he wrapped his thin arms around the younger boy. "Look, I know you're scared - so am I - but right now I need you to be the strong one, okay?"

"Okay..."

Matt smiled and hugged his brother closer. This is the last time I'll be able to, he thought sadly. Rocking TK in his arms he murmured, "No matter what happens, I'll always be here for you, okay? I'll never leave you."

TK nodded and hugged his brother before he stood up. Smiling through his tears, he asked, "So, I'll see you tomorrow morning?"

Matt hesitated, but concluded, "Yes, you'll see me."

TK's smile broadened and he hugged his older brother before leaving the room. Matt smiled and then looked back out the window to the sky. Closing his eyes, he turned and began to write.

After about an hour and a half, he stood up and shakily got into bed.

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The next morning, Mr. Ishida stretched and looked out the window from his bed. The sky swirled with gray clouds. Storm today, he thought as he got up and dressed. He went downstairs and met his ex-wife down there.

"Where's Matt and TK?"

"I'm guessing that they're still asleep," she answered. "They were still awake when I went to bed."

Mr. Ishida nodded and moved to the coffee machine to get himself a much-needed cup. All of a sudden, an anguished cry rang through the small country house, which caused the two adults in the kitchen to stop what they were doing. The man's cup shattered on the floor as it fell. The woman cried out, "TK!"

Running up the stairs, she came into the boy's room. He wasn't there.

"TK?"

"I-I'm in here," came the muffled reply.

With heavy hearts, they walked into their older son's room. There they saw an image they hoped that they would never see. TK was on his knees with face hidden by his hands as he rested them on Matt's bed. As they looked on, they saw what was wrong. Matt lay, pale, silent, and unmoving, in the center of his bed.

TK turned with a tear-streaked face and looked up at his parents. "He's gone. He's gone!" he cried out as he started sobbing again. In his hands he clasped a crumpled sheet of paper.

"TK," Ms. Takiashi whispered as she walked to him. She wrapped her arms around her son and Mr. Ishida followed her.

TK thrust the paper into his father's hands. "Read," came the quiet command. Looking down at his son and ex-wife then at his lifeless older son then back at the paper and started to read aloud.

Life it seems

To many's belief

Just a dance to waltz right by

But life to me

Day after day

Is a knife slashing through my side
All my years I have learned
That though I pray and hope
I can not run away
The night shall come
The moon, she will not fall
Until He leads my soul away
And the rain will fall
The thunder storm
Lightning crash through the sky
While the rage burns on
The tears descend
A cry pierce through the night
But I know that you are there
Through the darkness and shadows
Dawn rises in the east
Clouds drift in
Surrounding a young, innocent life
Grey heart full of

"My God..." Mr. Ishida whispered under his breath and stared at his silent son.

"Wh-where's the rest of it?" his ex-wife asked.

"He never got to finish it..." TK whispered as his tears stopped falling, his body and mind going into shock.

The piece of paper slipped from Mr. Ishida's slack fingers and he let it flutter to the wooden floor. Walking up to his motionless son, he felt the cold feeling set in even as hot tears burned his life-worn cheeks. _My God_, he thought, _Mattâ€|_ He dropped to his knees next to the still teen. Tears dropped onto the crisp bed sheets. He clutched Matt's cold hand in his own and ran stiff fingers through the boys tousled blond hair. _Noâ€|_

5. ...Moving towards a new future...